If I Were the Minister

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HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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ALTERNATIVE TO INDUSTRIALISM

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A correspondent writes:

"Do you then believe that industrialization of India — to the extent of India producing her own ships, locomotives, aeroplanes, etc. — is necessary? If not, will you kindly suggest the alternative means by which India shall discharge her responsibilities as a free and independent nation?

"If you believe in the establishment of such industries, who should, in your opinion, exercise control over the management and the profits that will accrue?"

I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

There may be sensation in living dangerously. We must draw the distinction between living in the face of danger and living dangerously. A man who dares to live alone in a forest infested by wild beasts and wilder men without a gun and with God as his only Help, lives in the face of danger. A man who lives perpetually in mid-air and dives to the earth below to the admiration of a gaping world lives dangerously. One is a purposeful, the other a purposeless life.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically in the face of a world, armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though, only an individual or a group makes the effort.

At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess monied men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no *pariahs* of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And all are men "for a' that".

And I avow this belief in the face of the inhumanities we have witnessed and may still have to witness in India as elsewhere. Let us live in the face of danger.

On the train to Delhi, 25-8-'46

THE PLACE OF MEDICINE IN NAI TALIM

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Being engrossed in her work and being considerate of my time, Ashadevi never takes it unnecessarily. She did, however, come to me for five minutes the day before my departure for Delhi, to ask whether, in my opinion, there was need for teachers in the Talimi Sangh to study medicine and whether she herself should have the same four or five years' course that doctors have.

I at once realized that in spite of utmost trying, it is difficult for one like Ashadevi who has taken her M. A. under the old system of education to break away completely from its influence.

I have no degrees to boast of. And I forgot long ago to attach any value to the little knowledge I acquired in a high school. And I have drunk deep at the fountain of nature cure. So I said to her:

"You say that the first lesson our children have to learn is how to keep fit and how to keep themselves and their surroundings clean in every respect. I say to you that all the medical knowledge you require comes into this. Our education is conceived for the crores of villagers, it is for their benefit. They live close to nature, but even so they do not know the laws of nature. What little they know, they do not carry out. Nai Talim is derived from our knowledge of the piteous condition of the villagers. We cannot, therefore, know much about this Nai Talim from books. What we have hitherto acquired is from the book of nature. In the same way, we have to learn village doctoring from nature too. The essence of nature cure is that we learn the principles of hygiene and sanitation and abide by those laws as well as the laws relating to proper nutrition. Thus does every one become his own doctor. The man who eats to live, who is friends with the five powers, earth, water, ether, sun and air and who is a servant of God, the Creator of all these, ought not to fall ill. If he does, he will remain calm relying on God and die in peace, if need be. If there are any medicinal herbs in the fields of his village he may make use of them. Crores live and die like this without a murmur. They have not so much as heard of a doctor, much less seen one

face to face. Let us become really village-minded. Village children and adults come to us. Let us teach them how to live truly. Doctors aver that 99% of disease springs from insanitation, from eating the wrong food and from under-nourishment. If we can teach this 99% the art of living, we can afford to forget the 1%. They may find a philanthropic doctor like Dr. Sushila Nayyar to look after them. We need not worry about them. Today pure water, good earth, fresh air, are unknown to us. We do not know the inestimable value of ether and the sun. If we make wise use of these five powers and if we eat the proper and balanced diet, we shall have done the work of ages. For acquiring this knowledge, we need neither degrees nor crores of money. What we need are a living faith in God, a zeal for service, an acquaintance with the five powers of nature and a knowledge of dietetics. All this can be acquired without wasting time in schools and colleges."

On the train to Delhi, 26-8-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

CONFUSION ABOUT RAMANAMA

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A friend writes:

> "Regarding your suggested cure of malaria by *Ramanama*, my problem is that I do not understand how to rely on a spiritual force for my physical ailments. I am also not sure if I deserve to be cured and if I am justified in praying for my salvation, when there is so much misery amongst my countrymen. The day I understand *Ramanama*, I shall pray for their salvation. Otherwise I would feel more selfish than I do today."

This is from a friend whom I believe to be an earnest seeker of truth. I take public notice of his difficulty, as it is typical of that of many like him.

Spiritual force is like any other force at the service of man. Apart from the fact that it has been used for physical ailments for ages with more or less success, it would be intrinsically wrong not to use it, if it can be successfully used for the cure of physical ailments. For, man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other. If you get rid of malaria by taking quinine, without thinking of the millions who do not get it, why should you refuse to use the remedy which is within you, because millions will not use it through their ignorance? May you not be clean and well because millions of others will not be so, ignorantly or may be, even cussedly? If you will not be clean out of false notions of philanthropy, you will deny yourself the duty of serving the very millions by remaining dirty and ill. Surely refusal to be spiritually well or clean is worse than the refusal to be physically clean and well.

Salvation is nothing more and nothing less than being well in every way. Why should you deny it for yourself, if thereby you show the way to others and beyond showing it, actually serve them in addition by reason of your fitness? But you are wholly selfish, when you take penicillin in order to get well, although you have the certain knowledge that the others cannot get it.

The confusion lying behind my correspondent's argument is obvious.

What, however, is true is that the taking of a pill or pills of quinine is much easier than gaining the knowledge of the use of *Ramanama*. It involves much effort as against the mere cost of buying quinine pills. The effort is worth making for the sake of the millions, in whose name and on whose behalf my correspondent will shut *Rama* out of his heart.

Sevagram, 17-8-'46

Notes

Goa

The game of hunting lovers of civil liberty is going on merrily in Goa. A small power because of its smallness often acts with impunity where a great power cannot. If the facts are as they have come to me, Shri Purushottam Kakodkar is fasting in his prison and may soon join the majority. As a believer unto death in Satyagraha, neither I nor any Satyagrahi should deplore the death. In such deaths of spotless victims lies the seed of true liberty.

But what of the Portuguese Power which boasts of philanthropy and alliance with the Roman Catholic Church? That Power will have to justify itself before man and God. The blood of the innocents (assuming the innocence of the victims) will cry out from their tombs or their ashes. It is more potent than the voice of the living, however powerful and eloquent.

On the train to Delhi, 26-8-'46

Cochin

I have read all that has appeared in the *Hindu* of 30th July about the announcement made by the Maharaja of Cochin. It is good as far as it goes. His Highness deserves congratulations for his courage. But good words do not carry us much further, unless they are accompanied by present action. It would certainly be a tremendous advance if the Maharaja were to make the beginning today, irrespective of what Travancore or other States do or do not do. Will Cochin become a part of what is called British Malabar today, the Maharaja keeping for himself no status other than what the free vote of the adult population of Cochin gives him?

Sevagram, 24-8-'46

Move on

On reading about my persistent darkness, a correspondent sends me the following lines of comfort:

> "The path may be clouded
> "Move on, for the orbit is fixed for your soul;
> "And though it may lead into darkness of night,
> "The torch of the Builder shall give it new light."

Savagram, 16-8-'46

English Notices

> "You and Congress Governments advocate immediate discontinuance of English as the medium of instruction in this country. Will you not exert your influence through the *Harijan* to get all sign and direction boards, plates of offices, names of roads, streets, lanes, villages, schools, colleges, hospitals etc. written in the regional language of the district? A change in Government or semi-Government institutions will be a lesson to private shops, stores, saloons etc. to follow suit. Articles in the Company's and other Acts requiring a name-board in English must go."

I believe that nowadays the tendency is towards the use of the regional language on signboards etc. The correspondent is right regarding Government institutions and offices. Now that there are national Governments, the change should be introduced.

If any such rule exists in Company's or other Acts as referred to by the correspondent, it should certainly go.

On the train to Delhi, 25-8-'46. M. K. G.

Hindustani Prachar Examinations

"The examinations for the Hindustani Prachar Sabha, Wardha, had been announced to take place on September 15th. But owing to the postal strike, letters were not delivered regularly for nearly a month nor did the centres receive the examination books in time. In the circumstances, the time for examinations has been postponed to November 17th (Sunday). In view of the extra time afforded, it is hoped that advantage will be taken to open more centres and more examinees will be forthcoming. The last day for receiving applications for the examinations at the Wardha office is 30th September."

I endorse the hope that the extra two months gained by the postponement will mean more entrants for the examinations.

On the train to Delhi, 25-8-'46 M. K. G.
(From *Harijansevak*)

Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust

In continuation of the list of provincial agents of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, already published in the 'Harijan', Gandhiji as the Chairman of the Trust has appointed the following provincial agents:

1. Delhi: Shrimati Vedkumari
2. Central India: Shrimati Rukmini Devi Sharma
3. Tamil Nad: Dr. Soundaram Ramchandran
4. Nizam's Dominions: Shrimati Gyan Kumari Heda
5. Maharashtra Shrimati Prema Kantak

Wardha, 6-8-'46 SHYAMLAL

Errata

1. In Harijan of July 28, 1946, in the article 'Inspiring for Gramsevaks', on p. 240, column two, line 4, read 1945 for 1935.
2. Same para, line 25, 'from the railway line' should read 'from the city'.
3. Second para, line 4, 'September 1943' should read 'September 1942'.
4. In Harijan of August 11, in the note on Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, on p. 258, the figure of Rs. 2,01,866-2-10 against total expenditure referred to expenditure through the Central Office only. To this must be added the following:

Expenditure through the Provincial Offices
Rs. 1,35,647-0-7

Advances that have nearly been spent
Rs. 80,681-7-10

Grand Total Rs. 4,18,194-11-3

5. In Harijan of August 25, 1946, in the article 'What can violence do?', on page 280, para three, last line read 'peace' for 'piece'.

ENGLISH INTO HINDUSTANI

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

What English knowing Indian has not felt the shame and sorrow of his failure to discover an equivalent for an English word in either his mother-tongue or the national language? A Gujarati lad has an English-Gujarati dictionary in such a case to help him; similarly an Urdu or Hindi knowing lad has his dictionary to fall back upon. But for Hindustani, which is neither Persianized Urdu nor Sanskritized Hindi and which is the tongue of the common folk of the North, whether Hindu or Mussalman, a writer has no dictionary to fall back upon. An attempt will be made through a column at least of the *Harijan* each week to furnish for English a Hindustani word or two, spelt in both Nagari and Urdu scripts. An endeavour will be made to give the names of those who will contribute their labour to this fascinating task. This is pioneer work and therefore will, like all pioneer work, have defects. Those who detect them, will confer a favour by drawing the attention to them of the Editor. I would suggest to students that they copy out these words week by week in a note-book and add to or amend the attempt. They will find that the labour will combine recreation with instruction.

Only those English words which are in common use, have been selected from a standard English dictionary. In reading the following, the reader should also know that no claim is made that the equivalents are the best possible or that they are exhaustive. They are a help to the searcher. The plan for this week is that those who are helping me to conduct the *Harijan* have prepared the first list. Kakasaheb and Acharya Shrimannarayan looked at the selection. The first letters of their names "Ka" or 'Shri' have been given in parenthesis after the addition.

Sevagram, 23-8-'46

1. Abandon *v.* छोड़ देना, तजना, (का०) त्यागना (श्री०) । چھوڑ دینا، تجنا، (کا) تیاگنا (شری)
2. Abase *v.* ज़लील करना, घटिया बनाना । ذلیل کرنا، گھٹیا بنانا
3. Abash *v.* पानी पानी करना, शर्मिंदा करना, शरमाना, झेंपना, लजाना । پانی پانی کرنا، شرمندہ کرنا، شرمانا، جھینپنا، لجانا
4. Abate *v.* घटना, घटाना, नरम पड़ना (का०) । گھٹنا، گھٹانا نرم پڑنا (کا)
5. Abbreviate *v.* छोटा करना । چھوٹا کرنا
6. Abdicate *v.* तखत छोड़ना, राज-पाट छोड़ना । تخت چھوڑنا، راج پاٹ چھوڑنا
7. Abdomen *n.* पेट پیٹ
8. Abduct *v.* भगा लेजाना । بھگا لے جانا
9. Abide by *v.* पक्का रहना (वादे पर), पालन करना (वचन का), पाबन्द रहना । پکا رهنا (وعدہ پر)، پالن کرنا (بچن کا)، پابند رهنا
10. Ability *n.* लियाक़त لیاقت
11. Able *adj.* लायक़ لائق
12. Abnormal *adj.* ग़ैर मामूली, अनरीत غیر معمولی، انریت
13. Abolish *v.* मिटाना, उठा देना, रद करना (का०) । مٹانا، اٹھا دینا، رد کرنا (کا)

HARIJAN

September 1 1946

IF I WERE THE MINISTER

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

The talks with the Ministers concerned at Poona on 29th to 31st July on village-crafts and basic education have given rise to a lot of correspondence and private discussion. For the guidance of the Provincial Governments and others interested in the question of Khadi which has naturally occasioned the bulk of the correspondence and discussion, I set forth below my thoughts on the subject.

I refer the reader to my note in the *Harijan* of 28th April last. My views, then expressed, remain unaltered. One thing has created a misunderstanding. Some friends have read compulsion in that note. I am sorry for the obscurity. In it I had answered the question as to what representative governments could do if they wished. I had, I hope pardonably, assumed that such governments' notices too could not be interpreted as compulsion. For every act of a *bona fide* representative government would assume consent of the voters represented. The voters would mean the whole populace, whether registered as voters or not. With that background, I wrote that the government should notify to the villagers that mill cloth would not be supplied to the villagers after a certain fixed date, so as to enable them to wear Khadi prepared by themselves.

Whatever the meaning of my article of 28th April last, I want to state that any scheme adopted about Khadi, without the willing co-operation of those concerned, must mean death to Khadi as a means for attaining Swaraj. Then the taunt that Khadi was a return to the darkness and slavery of the Middle Ages would be true. But I have held the contrary view. Whilst Khadi under compulsion was a badge of slavery, Khadi intelligently and voluntarily prepared, primarily for one's own use, was easily the badge of our freedom. Freedom is nothing if it is not all-round self-help. I, for one, would have nothing to do with Khadi, if it were not a free man's privilege as well as duty.

A friendly critic asks whether Khadi thus prepared could also and at the same time be for sale. Yes, if sale is its secondary use; not, if manufacture for sale is its only or even primary use. That we began with sale of Khadi shows temporary necessity as well as our limited vision. Experience is a great teacher. It has taught us many things. Not the least is its primary use. But it is by no means the last. But I must leave this fascinating field of speculation and proceed definitely to answer the question put in the heading.

My first business as the minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity, would be to find out from among the Permanent Service honest and incorruptible men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A., creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village-crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate, there should be no compulsion on the villagers, that they must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessaries. The scheme would thus have to be comprehensive. I would instruct my first man, therefore, to see the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and see what it has to say.

Let me assume that the scheme, thus produced, contains a clause saying that the villagers themselves declare that they would not want mill cloth, say, after one year from a fixed date, that they require cotton, wool and necessary implements and instruction, not as a gift but to be paid for on the easiest terms. The scheme provides too, that it will not apply at once to the whole of any province but only to a part to begin with. The scheme further tells one that the A. I. S. A. will guide and assist the working of the scheme.

Being convinced of its soundness, I would give it legal form in consultation with the law department and issue a notification, fully describing the genesis of the scheme. The villagers as well as the millowners and others would have been party to it. The notification will show clearly that it is the people's measure, though bearing the Government stamp. The Government money will be used for the benefit of the poorest villagers, making the largest return possible to the people concerned. It will, therefore, be probably the most profitable investment in which expert assistance will be voluntary and, overhead charges the least item. The notification will give in detail, the whole cost to the country and the return to the people.

The only question for me as minister is whether the A. I. S. A. has the conviction and capacity to shoulder the burden of creating and guiding a Khadi scheme to success. If it has, I would put my little barque to sea with all confidence.

On the train to Delhi, 26-8-'46

NOTICE

Readers will please note that a branch of the Navajivan Karyalaya has been recently opened at Delhi (Kucha Mahajani, Chandni Chowk). Copies of the four weeklies *Harijan* (English), *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati), and *Harijansevak* (both in Nagari and Urdu scripts), of our Gujarati monthly, *Shikshan ane Sahitya*, and our publications will be available there. The subscriptions for the weeklies and the monthly will be received there. All sales in Delhi and New Delhi, of *Harijan* and its various editions will henceforth be handled by the branch office.

MANAGER

WEEKLY LETTER

I

MAHADEV DESAI DAY

The fourth anniversary of Mahadevbhai's death in prison was jointly observed by the various Sevagram institutions on the 15th of August. Beginning with a *baitalik* in the morning, the students and workers went round the Ashram singing Rabi Babu's songs dear to Mahadevbhai and dispersed after a final chorus in front of his hut. An exhibition of specimens of calligraphy and common spinning occupied the place of honour in the day's programme. His diaries, manuscripts, letters, all in his uniform print-like hand, provided a perfect feast for the eyes. Whether he wrote English, Gujarati, Sanskrit or Persian script, it carried the mark of distinction and elegance. Specimens of handwriting of other celebrities in the Congress and of numerous lesser lights in the Ashram, who had more or less successfully adopted him as their model in that respect, not to mention the students of the Basic School, completed the picture.

Gandhiji swears by little things on which, he has often averred, his life is built. Drawing attention to three aspects of Mahadev's life at the prayer gathering on the evening of the 15th, he remarked: "Friends and admirers of Mahadev Desai have been following the practice of observing his death anniversary by occupying themselves with something dear to him. His was a rich, gifted hand. He had many loves. Among these the spinning wheel held the first place. He span regularly and beautifully like the artist that he was. No matter how fatigued or overworked he was, he always found time for spinning. It refreshed him.

"Among his many accomplishments, not the least was his peerless handwriting. There he was master. Ramadas Swami in one of his couplets has likened beautiful handwriting to a lustrous pearl. The characters which Mahadev's pen traced were like a pearl without a flaw.

"His third quality which all should emulate and copy was his love of the Indian tongues. He was a linguist. He attained proficiency in Bengali, Marathi and Hindi and he learnt Urdu. In jail he attempted to learn Persian and Arabic under Khwaja Sahib M. A. Majid, who was a fellow prisoner."

Commenting on Rabi Babu's song that had been sung, Gandhiji observed: "The song which you have just heard was one of Mahadev's favourite songs. He has rendered it into Gujarati verse too.

> When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy,
>
> When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song,
>
> When tumultous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my Lord of silence, with Thy peace and rest.
>
> When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door of my mind, and come with the ceremony of a king.
>
> When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O Thou Holy One, Thou wakeful, come with Thy light and Thy thunder. — Gitanjali

That summed up the innermost yearning of the deceased's soul. May it do yours too. Mahadev's life was an inexhaustible well of virtues which you can all share. The sharing won't diminish its volume. That is the beauty of spiritual treasures. As the Upanishad says:

"पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥"

PANDIT NEHRU AT SEVAGRAM

Availing themselves of Pandit Jawaharlal's presence at Wardha in connection with the Working Committee's meeting, the Sevagram group of institutions invited Panditji to meet them in the New Talimi Sangh Hall also known as Rabi Hall at Sevagram Ashram. These included the Khadi Vidyalaya, the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the Go-Seva Sangh and the trainees under the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial scheme. In a luminous little speech Panditji expressed great satisfaction at the pace at which the place had grown since he had visited Sevagram last. A busy hive of constructive activities institutions had sprung up where only a few scattered hamlets stood before. Great tasks awaited the trainees, who had come there for training, on their return to their respective fields of work, he said. It was no small task to raise the level of 40 crores of men, women and children. Papers, remarked Panditji, were full of politics these days. In a way it was natural. But they should remember that political independence only cleared the way for constructive work. It could not take the place of constructive work. "If we succeed in driving out the English and the condition of the country remains unchanged, we shall only have travelled farther to fare worse. Political independence will only remove the obstacles that hinder nation-building. Real work would only then begin. We must remove the poverty and unemployment that afflict our masses and ameliorate their condition in general."

"What is wealth?" asked Panditji and replied, "Not gold and silver." A traveller who lost his way in the desert could not eat or drink gold and silver. He would gladly exchange all the gold and silver in the world for a morsel of food and a drink of water to sustain life. Gold and silver only provide a handy medium for the exchange of useful commodities. A nation's wealth was measured not by the precious metal in its vaults but by the useful commodities it possessed and the capacity to produce them. A nation that had healthy and industrious men and women with the skill and talent to produce useful commodities, was a rich nation, although it did not own an ounce of gold or silver. On the contrary, a nation that lacked these was a poor nation in spite of all the gold and silver it might possess. A person who did not produce but only consumed was a parasite living upon the industry of others and became a burden to society.

"Today on the one side, we have the spectacle of the idle rich who do no work and on the other, the poor toilers who starve because they can get no employment. The numerous arts and crafts of the people which once flourished in this country,

when India was free, have been killed and recurring famines ravage the land which today lies weak and exhausted as a result. That is our present plight. It has to be remedied. Not a single person should be without employment or means of sustenance. All should have equal opportunity for development and growth. All men are not equal in one sense — some are intelligent, others stupid, some weak, others strong. You cannot condemn a person for inefficiency when he has been denied the opportunity to develop efficiency. How can you expect a poor illiterate, half-starved villager to show the same capacity or efficiency as a well-fed person who has had all the opportunities for education and growth. It is not necessary that all men should be equal in every respect but all should have equal opportunity in life. Then alone can there be a fair appraisement of talent."

Capacity to earn money, went on the speaker, was no measure of talent. A money bag which a man made by exploitation at the expense of others was not an asset to the country. But a person who produced something useful, however commonplace, e. g. a table or a chair, added to the wealth of the country and was therefore an asset. It had become a fashion these days to attach exaggerated importance to academic education. It was also true that many of our distinguished public men, present and past, were drawn from the lawyer class. But it was a great mistake to think that Swaraj could be run with the help of academic talent alone. If all took to law, the country would be in a poor way. The country could do without a single lawyer but there would be a serious crisis if all the *bhangis* struck work for a single day. And yet this most useful member of society was dubbed as unclean and an inferior being. " Such is our topsyturvydom. India will need an army of trained workers, artisans, craftsmen, engineers, doctors and teachers to serve her people in the villages. We shall have to train them. That is what is being done here. I regard this work as being of first-class importance. A nation is not made great by a few distinguished personalities on the top but by raising the level of the whole mass of the people. Absence of outstanding personalities does not matter if the foundation is sure and strong. It is therefore of the utmost importance to strengthen the foundation. Gandhiji has done more than anybody else, to raise the level of the masses. But much more needs to be done in that direction. The students of today will be the teachers of tomorrow. If their training is neglected or otherwise defective, the foundation of Swaraj will be weak. The work that is being done here today, therefore, may not be outwardly very exciting or ostentatious but it is vital. It therefore delights me to see so many of you engaged in laying a solid foundation of the Swaraj to come."

The Return of the Native

When a man returns to his country after an exile of 30 years and more, for no other crime than love of the Motherland, he naturally becomes a legendary figure. In the case of Raja Mahendra Pratap, the legendary character is further strengthened by his bizarre appearance and still more bizarre personality. After numerous adventures in Afghanistan where he became an Afghan citizen, Germany, Russia and China, he found himself under Gen. Mac Arthur's custody in a war criminals' camp after the occupation of Japan by the American forces. In October last, when his fate hung in the balance, he occupied himself with drafting his plan of ' Universal Unity ': which he sent to Gandhiji for publication. " Our Muslim brethren, those Indians who fought in the war, Princes and the English elements in the country can all co-operate in our Congress if we see the new changes in the world in the right perspective," he wrote. The manifesto was signed " M. Peter Pratap, Servant of Mankind, Founder of World Federation ! " He himself refused to take part in the world war No. II, nor did he join hands with Netaji Bose or the late Shri Rash Behari Bose. In Japan he insisted on describing himself as a "Stateless subject " and thereby added to the difficulty of those who were trying to help him to return to India. He speaks English, German, Russian, French and Persian, besides several Indian languages. He believes in the unity of all religions and the religion of universal love after his own style. At Sevagram Ashram, when he came to see Gandhiji the other day, he recited at Gandhiji's invitation his cosmopolitan prayer, consisting of extracts from Hindu scriptures, Bible and Koran, in addition to the Buddhist prayer at the evening prayer gathering. At Wardha in Bajajwadi, where he was a guest with the Sardar, he forgot to eat his luncheon in reciting his prayer verses while others dined ! A colourful if an eccentric personality, years ago he donated his fortune to finance the Prem Maha Vidyalaya at Brindaban of which he is the founder. His friends and workers of the Vidyalaya will be glad to welcome him back after such a prolonged absence.

Sevagram, 19-8-'46

II

His Spiritual Laboratory

Utopias have a nasty knack of recoiling on the heads of their authors. In Swift's Utopia philosophers, scientists and mathematicians among them, made a mess of things. The scientists devoted all their time to " extracting sunbeams from cucumbers " or " growing grain from chaff ", the days and nights of the philosophers were spent in inventing robot permutation and combination word-machines for producing philosophical systems to order, the mathematicians occupied themselves with abstruse mathematical speculations about the courses of the planets and the probable end of the world " till their eyes were fixed with horror" ! The net result of it all, however, was that in the whole kingdom of Laputa not a wall stood erect, not a corner of a building but was crooked ! Gandhiji is no Utopian. He is determined not to let his Ashram turn into another Laputa. It is no easy task that he has set to himself. " Politics I take easy, " he once remarked. " They leave me unperturbed. For, I can cut my way through them by the 'sharp axe of detachment'." But the Ashram sucks him dry. It presents problems that would turn anybody's hair grey. Yet it has a

fatal fascination for him. "I do not know why," he remarked on another occasion, "but whatever institution I touch, I end by converting it into an Ashram — I seem to know nothing else." The explanation is not far to seek. Truth and *ahimsa* with him are no cloistered virtues to be practised in a vacuum. They are meant to be of use to mankind in daily life.

The poet lamented that he found God in the "shining of the stars" and in the "flowering of the fields" but that "in His ways with men and world" he found Him not. As a votary of truth and *ahimsa* Gandhiji holds that he must realize his God of truth and *ahimsa* in his little world of Sevagram Ashram or not at all. It is his spiritual laboratory. He goes further and insists that he must he judged solely by his surroundings. "My truth and *ahimsa* should be deemed to have validity only to the extent that they are reflected in the people around me," he says. Naturally he has to tackle their taxing conundrums.

A Hard Case

On our return to Sevagram Ashram after a few months' absence, one of the workers was found to have got mentally deranged. He was in that state when he first came. This was the second attack. He became uncontrollable and a decision had to be taken. The Civil Surgeon of Wardha was consulted. He said he could not keep him in the Civil Hospital but would look after him in the Jail Hospital. So in his own interest as well as in the interest of the Settlement, he had to be sent to confinement. For Gandhiji it was like drawing out a live tooth but there was no escape. He put his dilemma before the Ashram people. "He is a fine worker. After his recovery last year, he looked after the garden and kept the hospital accounts. He worked diligently and was happy in his work. Then he got malaria and was given a quinine injection because injection works quicker. He says the injection has gone to his head and is responsible for his mental affection. While I was working in my room this morning, I found him wandering to and fro outside, shouting and gesticulating. I went out to him and walked with him. He was quieted. But the moment I left him, he became uncontrollable again. He gets violent too and listens to no one. So he had to be sent to jail.

"It has naturally hurt me to think that one of our workers should be sent to jail. I may be asked: 'what about your *Ramanama* which you have claimed to be a cure-all?' Even in the face of this failure let me reiterate that my faith remains intact. *Ramanama* can never fail. The failure only means a lack in us. We must seek the cause of failure within us."

Ahimsa and Cleanliness

Sanitation and cleanliness being the basic conditions of civilized life, great emphasis is laid upon them in the Ashram. But all sorts come there and some one, probably a raw newcomer, through ignorance or carelessness, wrongly used the latrine. It was brought to Gandhiji's notice. It grieved him. A mistake committed by any one member of society affected all the others. It was therefore everybody's duty to see that a latrine was always left clean and tidy after use. If proper care was taken, there should be no smell, no fly-breeding. Trench system for the disposal of night-soil had been held to blame for flies. He differed. Trench latrines with proper care should be perfectly safe.

In Bangalore, in a hotel, Dr. Fowler used an interesting method. He collected night-soil in a reservoir. The solid and liquid matter was well mixed, then poured on to a mound and covered with dry earth from day to day. No one could guess whether the mound was just dry earth or something else. After due conversion, it was sold as manure, as clean looking as any. If fly-breeding could not be avoided, epidemics and diseases were bound to occur. Yet it was extraordinary to see how complacent our people were about it. The food on which a fly has sat, should be considered unfit for human consumption. It should be thrown away. But theirs was a poor country where the vast majority could not afford to throw away food. Therefore, it was their first duty in terms of *ahimsa*, to prevent fly-breeding at all cost.

The external cleanliness was only a step towards internal cleanliness. Dirt within was much more dangerous than dirt without. "We should be cent per cent clean in our thoughts and actions. Otherwise, man becomes worse than the beast, for, a beast is a useful creature and deserves our respect and regard in its own place. An unclean man is undesirable in decent society."

Problems in Village Sanitation

The fact that Sevagram is an unhealthy spot has always worried Gandhiji. It is situated in a hollow. The subsoil water rises almost to the ground level in the rainy season and creates problems in night-soil disposal, drinking water supply and malaria control. The incidence of malaria has grown less of late and health conditions on the whole have improved. Still Sevagram cannot be called a model, healthy village. On the 18th instant Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Secretary of the Advisory Medical Board under the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust scheme and Resident Doctor in charge of health arrangements in Sevagram Ashram and Village, called a meeting of doctor friends who had been kind enough to help her with their suggestions and guidance from time to time. Foremost among them was Dr. Jivraj Mehta who, in spite of his multifarious activities, always manages to find time for Sevagram. He has inspanned the services of Dr. B. C. Dasgupta, the Health Officer of Bombay, Dr. Vishwanathan, the Malareologist for Bombay Presidency. Dr. Hassan, the new Public Health Minister of C. P. came with a batch of public Health Officers under him and they all went round the village and inspected its surroundings.

Thanks to the lack of co-ordination between the P.W.D. and the Public Health Department that characterizes our provincial administrations, the District Board has left a chain of straggling burrow

pits on either side of the *pucca* road that they have built between Wardha and Sevagram. With a little foresight and planning, the chain of pits might have been a drainage canal and thus served a double purpose. As it is, burrow pits have become pest-holes. The water in them stagnates and breeds mosquitoes. Then there are a number of *nullahs* near about, leaving pools of stagnant water. The earth is black cotton soil which cracks in the dry sun after the rainy season and the water stagnates in the fissures and breeds mosquitoes.

As anti-malaria measures, the doctors recommended D.D.T. spraying of the houses in the village, leaving the regulation and desilting of *nullahs* to be handled as a land reclamation project by the department concerned.

As regards the disposal of night-soil, they were of the opinion that septic tanks were the only solution if we want to eliminate the *bhangis* as a class. They were strongly opposed to trench latrines except as an emergency measure during festivals and the like. Whatever the possibilities of trench latrines theoretically, in practice, it led to fly-breeding and in a place like Sevagram with high subsoil water, contamination of water was bound to occur. For disposal of refuse and cowdung they suggested composting. As for pure water supply, they suggested that protected wells should be built while other wells whose water supply was not safe, should be filled in.

The proposals were placed before Gandhiji by Dr. Jivraj Mehta. Gandhiji while thanking them all for the trouble they had taken, said, he was afraid, elaborate schemes costing large sums of money would not do. He wanted Sevagram to serve as a model and therefore, he wanted nothing there, which could not be multiplied in the 700,000 villages. If they could do that satisfactorily even in one village, it might solve the problem of the other villages of India. Otherwise progress would be at a snail's pace and ambitious planning in a few villages would only stand out as a monument of costly futility.

The project of land reclamation was therefore for the time being put into cold storage. D. D. T. spraying was already being carried on. Gandhiji suggested that it should be intensified. The Government could use the place as a centre for experimental survey and malaria control. They could build a few septic tanks as an experiment but he felt sure that trenching, properly carried out, must remain the solution in the vast majority of cases. Shri Aryanayakam of the Talimi Sangh had offered to make an experiment to see if trenching could not be done without fly-breeding.

Unto This Last

The doctors left in the evening somewhat nonplussed. Was it not Eugenne Debbs who said that so long as there was an unreclaimed criminal, his business was to identify himself with him? A little incident that happened on the morning of the 25th, the day of Gandhiji's departure from Sevagram, furnished an insight into Gandhiji's mind. An Ashram inmate had come to say good-bye. He wanted to touch his feet. "Why should you want to touch my feet?" said Gandhiji. "Millions cannot do that and what millions cannot afford, we should voluntarily renounce. I go so far as to say that if *ahimsa* cannot be practised by the millions, I have no use for it for myself. But if they did not want to, although they could, I would hold on to it, even if I were all alone. People say that *ahimsa* is only for the saint and the seer. I think otherwise. If what they say is right, it ceases to have any value in my eyes. Similarly, if it were open to me alone to desire and strive to live for 125 years, I would not entertain that desire. But everybody can and should desire to live for 125 years, for the service of God and His creation. Self-interest too demands that. For, what would life be worth in a world, in which I am the sole survivor of all those I have worked with and known?"

Gandhiji had two little functions during the week with the trainees of the Hindustani Prachar School and of the Talimi Sangh respectively. But of these more in my next.

On the train to Delhi, 25-8-'46 PYARELAL

WE ARE ALL INDIANS

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A Roman Catholic student from Goa had the sad experience of being told by some of his fellow students in Bombay that he was a Portuguese and therefore a foreigner. When he told them that the Roman Catholics of Goa had castes just like the Hindus, he was not believed. These transitory lapses will take place whilst we are shedding our narrownesses and claiming all to be free Indians, slaves neither of the British, nor of the Portuguese nor any other foreign rule. If the same students were wisely handled, they would be proud to know their friend as an Indian and not as a Goan and be known themselves as Indians, not Bombayites. Everyone's religion is his own concern but his nationality is a corporate thing, carrying with it important and far-reaching consequences. That even among converts, there are castes is a reflection upon Hinduism and should set every Hindu athinking and make him become, with me, a *bhangi*.

Sevagram, 23-8-'46

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